

Missisquoi Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC)

Wednesday, October 7, 2026

11:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Meeting video posted at <https://youtu.be/g-D66sEtZUA>.

A VIDEO RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE NRPC YOUTUBE CHANNEL (Link above).

THE WRITTEN MINUTES ARE A SYNOPSIS OF THE DISCUSSION AT THE MEETING. MOTIONS ARE AS STATED. MINUTES WILL BE SUBJECT TO CORRECTION BY THE COUNCIL. CHANGES, IF ANY, WILL BE RECORDED IN THE MINUTES OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Council Members: Lindsey Wight (Q), Kent Henderson (Q), Lauren Weston (Q), Ted Sedell (Q), Heidi Britch-Valenta (Q), Dan Seeley (Q), Sophie Phelan (q), Dan Seeley (Q), Allaire Diamond (Q), Sarah Downes (Q)

Q= towards quorum q= towards quorum when representative has recused or is absent

Staff: Dean Pierce, Lorna Peters

Others present: Bridget Butler (FNLC), Josh Serpe (FNLC), Orenna Brand (FCNRCD), Mel Auffredou (FCNRCD), Chris Rottler (DEC), Jim Pease (DEC – retired), Karen Bates (DEC)

1. Welcome and introductions

Lindsey opened the meeting at 11:03 as Chair. A round of introductions was made.

2. Meeting protocols

Lindsey reviewed norms for meeting on Zoom.

3. Conflict of interest declarations, if any

Lauren declared a conflict of interest and indicated she would not vote on the project applications from FCNRCD. Lindsey declared a conflict of interest and indicated she would not vote not vote on project applications from MRBA.

4. Review/adjust and approve agenda

No changes to the agenda were made. Sarah motioned to approve. Allaire seconded. Agenda was approved.

5. Approval of minutes

No changes were made. Sarah motioned to approve. Lauren seconded. Minutes were approved.

6. Public comment not related to items on agenda

Chris Rottler emphasized the need for responses to the public comment survey for reappointment on the Missisquoi CWSP, ideally by the end of the week.

7. Seating of members/alternates

Dean explained that this is a standing agenda item. Sophie Phelan was seated as an alternate for Beth Torpey at NVDA and shared on her experience and position at NVDA.

8. Report on budget adjustments/Budget adjustment request

No budget adjustments were requested.

9. BWQC Action on previously un-invoiced legal expenses

Dean recapped how, at the previous meeting, he had described the new process for including project legal fees in project costs. This item has been included on the agenda for NRPC to request BWQC authorization for use of project funds to cover legal expenses for the Stone Dam removal project. Those costs total \$3,095 AND were not part of totals shared at the time of the August meeting. **Sarah motioned to approve this funding. Ted seconded. Motion carried.**

10. Project Review

Six total applications were received in this funding round. But, earlier in the day, the sponsor for one of the applications (MRBA) withdrew it. Of the five remaining applications, two seek funds for project development projects and three seek funds for riparian buffer plantings.

14979 Lake Carmi

Mel presented on the Lake Carmi Watershed PD funding request. She shared that this funding will be used to start communicating with landowners identified in a previous watershed-wide study by Fitzgerald Environmental. The aim is to identify natural resources, Lake Wise, and agricultural project sites. Mel hopes that at least two projects will move forward to implementation. This proposal is for ~\$19,000. Karen asked if the projects being looked at and brought to implementation will be culvert replacements which have low-cost effectiveness --and likely not coming to the BWQC for approval-- as well as highly cost-effective projects like plantings. Mel shared that they will be looking at a

variety of project types. **Sarah motioned to approve this project funding. Ted seconded. Lauren abstained. Motion carried.**

15000 Missisquoi Bay Basin Riparian

Lauren presented on the Missisquoi Bay Basin Riparian Planting PD Project. She shared that this project would build on a study done on projects in the Missisquoi Bay Basin when the FFI tool was first introduced. This proposal is for about \$25,000. Lauren clarified that the high cost will hopefully result in at least three projects coming to the BWQC for implementation. This phase includes making a list to get approved by the Basin Planner and River Scientists for potential projects, at which point landowners can be contacted. Allaire asked for clarification on the potential for design funds coming after this, and Lauren explained that this will cover design for plantings up to the implementation phase. **Allaire motioned to approve this project. Sarah seconded. Lauren abstained. Motion carried.**

Dean added that while project development is ideally \$3-5,000 per project, this project will look at a lot of projects and results in higher costs if only 2-3 will go to implementation. Jim also added to that by saying buffer planting projects can go straight to implementation and have lower fees associated and asked why this is only looking at buffer plantings. Lauren explained that the plantings are good projects for the NRCD because work can be done in-house and are usually highly cost-effective. Lauren also added that they hope to be applying for many implementation projects in January as a good amount of final design projects are wrapping up now. Mel also added that the FFI tool and satellite research is especially helpful for identifying planting projects as it also includes the incision ratio for streams.

14996 The Branch Kings Hill Rd

Orenna presented on The Branch Riparian Buffer Planting project. The project was identified through a NRCC-funded Municipal Outreach PD grant, which proved to be difficult as Water Quality projects are usually not at the front of the town's mind. This project would take 1.17 acres of mowed grass to an effective buffer. Orenna noted that the cost-effectiveness is relatively low because the P-credit is only 1.08 kg and cost is high because of known deer and beaver pressure, resulting in the need for tree tubes on site.

Responding to a note in the meeting materials, Orenna clarified that this project has had no cultural resource issues to date. Lauren added that VDHP looks over all projects for cultural resources issues. Orenna shared that she had nothing come up with this project during her review and has submitted the project to CHAMP.

Ted asked how high the grasses get, and Orenna shared she was not sure. Ted followed up by adding that pre-planting work would be helpful in this scenario. Orenna agreed and mentioned that the Town could brush hog before planting and FCNRCD does weed whack as part of their regular maintenance for plantings, if they were to maintain this project. Kent

asked for additional information on what watershed this project is in and the current management of the field. Orenna explained this project is in the Tyler Branch watershed and her understanding is the project is not being actively managed so manure is not being spread, the property is only being mowed by the Town for utility access. **Sarah motioned. Ted seconded. Lauren abstained. Motion carried.**

14780 Burton Main Stem

Lindsey presented on a project in North Troy on a parcel with three miles of Missisquoi River frontage. Two of her project applications are on this one landowner's property but are split into two projects due to different practices. The eastern site, including four parcels, will be a riparian buffer project, ultimately reconnecting the river to its floodplain and resulting in a 68kg/year reduction. The proposal is for about \$120,000 and includes hiring a contractor for the project. Karen asked how the floodplain reconnection is working, and Lindsey explained it is purely because the project will be taking the field out of agricultural production.

Dean asked for Lindsey to comment on site accessibility for planting and maintenance. Lindsey shared that the landowner has maintained many trails and forest roads on other properties and will maintain access trails, and ultimately the landowner hopes to introduce some public access trails on the property. Dean requested that a map of the trails on the property be provided at some point.

Kent asked for the previous use of the land. Lindsey added that some areas are conserved but this area is not, and much of this property is forested. Ted added that the hay fields are leased out to a major dairy producer in the NEK and the landowner is very interested in conserving the land and reducing haying where appropriate. Kent asked if the land would potentially be used for grazing, and Ted said no. Lindsey added that there is a lot of opportunity for public access, conserved property, and wildlife corridors in this area.

Jim asked where Big Falls State Park is located in relation to the property and Lindsey pointed it out on the map. Allaire noted the potential of this funding for use for conserving land to preserve these riparian project areas. **Lauren motioned to approve funding this project. Sarah seconded. Lindsey abstained. Motion carried.**

14781 Burton Tributaries

Lindsey then presented on the project located on the western side of the property. The project will include small pockets of stream plantings and some areas of BDAs and floodplain reconnection. This project results in about 50kg/year reduction. Lauren asked about planting in the stream since Staci Pomeroy has recommended not planting in these areas, as well as permitting. Lindsey said that they will acquire necessary permits and planting in the stream is occurring along a straightened stream and they are hoping to increase sinuosity of the stream through this planting.

Karen noted that the project needs to be updated in the Watershed Projects Database and that Staci Pomeroy will need to approve the project plans. Mel asked about the cultural resources assessments since VDHP has noted that BDA projects do require cultural resources assessments. Lindsey replied that Ellen at MRBA has been managing the project and has been in contact with VDHP about this project. **Sarah motioned to approve funding this project. Heidi seconded. Ted asked if he would need to abstain since OCNRCD has a sister project in the area, to which Dean said no. Lindsey abstained. Motion carried.**

Lindsey added that the final project application submitted will hopefully be brought to the BWQC in the future.

11. Policy updates

Dean brought attention to the CWIP policy indicating that subgrantees cannot be reimbursed for their project expenses prior to contract signing. Dean explained if the current policy is changed, it might be possible to reimburse expenses once a “notice to proceed” is issued. Dean added that this is not necessarily an action item. But, if action is taken, it could result in letters being sent to DEC or comments being submitted on the draft updated CWIP Funding policy, when it is released. Lauren said that she would like to advocate for this idea and a similar process happens with Tactical Basin Planning funds.

Jim asked for clarification on which state department a policy change would apply to. Dean said this would only apply to DEC’s CWIP program, not other state departments. Heidi asked what the next move will be on this topic. Dean said if no formal action is taken by the BWQC this conversation still could be noted in CWSP quarterly reporting. Kent added that this would be a helpful policy change when it comes to communicating with subcontractors and would support moving forward with sharing this suggestion to DEC. **Sarah motioned to approve the CWSP moving forward with communicating to DEC that the BWQC would favor this policy change. Heidi seconded. Motion carried.**

12. Updates/In brief

Dean shared thanks for those who have replied to his request for information on future potential CWSP-funded projects in the region. He also shared the future funding round dates, with the next round opening December 16th and closing January 20th. The CWSP reappointment process next step is submitting a self-assessment to DEC. Finally, Dean shared on some training opportunities in the region and Mel followed up with information on FCNRCD’s upcoming clean water permitting webinars and in-person permitting workshops. Dean added that the Rivers and Roads Tier 2 Training is happening next week in Colchester and there is a identifying wetlands on agricultural land training being held in Rutland by the conservation district there.

Dean also mentioned the timing difference between when elections happen and when organizations apply for Tactical Basin Planning funds. Dean updated the BWQC that he has a discussion scheduled with Ben Copans on the topic soon.

Allaire shared a before and after photo update on the Stone Dam removal project.

Karen noted that the Missisquoi Basin TBP is out for public comment formally. She recently made a presentation to the NRPC board, which should be available to view on the NRPC Youtube channel. Karen will present on the DEC TBP in December once the new plans are finalized, and added that the updated DEC Non-Point Source Plan can also be a helpful resource.

Dean mentioned the idea of farmer payments for loss of crop income due to clean water projects. Chris Rottler shared that he is doing some research on landowner payments for clean water projects, and that he is looking at payments for both farmers and landowners in general.

Dean then followed up on Lauren's chat comment about submitting contractor invoices, saying that invoices are needed as soon as possible after the end of the CWSP fiscal year (June 30th), including all contractor invoices. He also asked that if potential delays are known, that be communicated to him so that he may share that with NRPC staff.

Lauren asked about contractors that follow a monthly invoicing schedule that is off-schedule (ex: 15th of the month to 15th). Dean said that contractors should give an estimate for work through June 30th, and Lauren added that this would have the potential to change contracts with subcontractors and can be an unrealistic goal for small organizations. Dean will organize a meeting between Lindsey, Bridget, Lauren, and NRPC staff to discuss this issue.

Lauren brought up that a Public Participation Policy and public outreach is a huge missing potential for getting CWSP projects funded and hoped that this topic be added to an agenda in the future. Lindsey added that she appreciates this comment and agreed that this should be a future meeting topic. Chris shared that he agrees, and a former DEC Americorps member used to run a newsletter which was helpful in this regard, and that trainings are also helpful.

Sarah noted that municipal representatives are usually volunteers and overwhelmed with tasks, and without the communication from watershed organizations, they might not even know certain areas are an issue in their municipality. Lindsey noted that this should not fall on the town and many organizations do not have the capacity either, so there needs to be another person/contractor that can come in and help with public outreach so we can meet TMDL roles.

Lindsey clarified that her idea was that contractors could come to municipalities for project funding, which could receive assistance with contracting from organizations that

do not have capacity to manage projects on their own but can provide assistance. Kent added that this process has become far more complicated than was promised and emphasized the need for increased capacity. Heidi said that a list of prequalified contractors could be helpful for private landowners to move forward with projects on their own, and Dean shared the list with the group.

13. Future Meeting topics /Conclusion

Dean shared a slide on potential future meeting topics, including the Public Participation Policy.

14. Adjourn

Lauren motioned to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 1:00.